

VZCZCXYZ0002  
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHVI #1279/01 2801516  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 071516Z OCT 09  
FM AMEMBASSY VIENNA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3405  
INFO RUEHSS/OECD POSTS COLLECTIVE  
RUEHRC/USDA FAS WASHDC 1257  
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHDC  
RUEAEPA/EPA WASHDC

UNCLAS VIENNA 001279

SIPDIS

OES/SAT FOR HODGKINS  
PASS USTR  
PASS OMB FOR BECK  
USDA FOR FAS/OSTA/FROGETT  
USEU FOR GARRAMONE  
PARIS FOR OECD / LEWIS  
HHS FOR FDA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [TSPL](#) [TPHY](#) [TBIO](#) [ETRD](#) [EAGR](#) [AT](#) [EU](#)

SUBJECT: Readout of OECD Nanotechnology Roundtable in Vienna

11. SUMMARY: A key theme at the OECD Roundtable on "Risk Governance Policy for Nanotechnology" in Vienna September 25 was that public perception of risk -- even in the absence of good data -- is becoming a driving force in nanotechnology regulation in some OECD states. Delegates advised breaking out of the catch-all term "nanotechnology" since the various forms of nanotechnology present very different industrial, regulatory, and public outreach requirements. END SUMMARY.

Moving the Public Debate Upstream

12. The OECD Roundtable on the "Risk overnance of Nanotechnology" September 25 was hoted by the Austrian Government and attended by 4 regulators, risk assessment experts from governmet and academia, and a smattering of industry reprsentatives rom 15 countries. The roundtable foused on three issues:  
-- From Risk Assessment T Risk Management  
-- Stakeholder Participation-- Voluntary Measure For Risk Management

NOTE: he U.S. delegation included Vivian Ota Wang (National Nanotechnology Initiative), Carlos Pena (HHS/FDA), and Robert Ford (State/OES).

13. Swiss and British representatives described how those two governments had used consultation groups to assess public sentiments on nanotechnology. Sergio Bellocci from the Swiss Center for Technology Assessment reported how an eight-day public debate exercise with 30 randomly selected citizens resulted in a 2006 report that later became part of a parliamentary debate on the future of nanotechnology. Bellocci posited that early identification of public hopes and fears is fundamental to the successful governance of a new technology. Swiss representatives strongly endorsed food and food packaging regulations, to include full disclosure of nano-ingredients and nano-materials; Bellocci opined that the Swiss food industry has resisted involvement in the nano-governance dialogue.

14. By contrast, Joyce Tait from Edinburgh University argued that "upstream" public engagement could lead to premature policy decisions. As an example, she described how a series of public workshops in the UK on the benefits and risks of nanotechnologies led to cuts in research funding for the field of "Theranostics" (wherein nano-devices are inserted into patients to read their chemical levels and provide automatic adjustments). She emphasized that nanotechnology governance at the basic research level should be flexible and voluntary, and should avoid constraining future innovation. French delegate Francoise Roure (CGTI)said public perception is also affecting the R&D choices being made by private

sector companies.

#### Defining Nanotechnology for Regulation

15. The problem of defining "nanotechnology" was a recurring issue at the OECD Roundtable, and at Austrian Academy of Science's September 24 conference on the "Possible Health Effects of Manufactured Nanomaterials." Several participants criticized as impractical the International Risk Governance Council's grouping of nanotechnologies into "Frame 1" (simpler nanostructures with more known risks) and "Frame 2" (complex, dynamic nanostructures of unknown, but possibly greater risk). EC experts Hermann Stamm (JRC) and Mat-Olof Mattsson (DG SANCO) posited an alternative grouping of nanoparticles by their size, specific surface areas, and chemical reactivity characteristics as more sensible from a risk/regulatory perspective -- but said that more data is available, regulators should take a case-by-case approach.

#### Getting Industry into the Game

16. Discussions at both events reflected experts' frustration with both the lack of risk data and the level of participation so far from industry in the governance process. George Katalagarianakis (DG Research) speculated that in the area of nano-medicine, this reluctance stemmed from either an industry belief that company data would be misused in regulation or an effort to protect intellectual property rights from competitors. Data access problems notwithstanding, delegates portrayed the biomedical and textile industries as more willing to participate in governance than the food industry.

17. Terry Medley (DuPont/USA) presented DuPont's voluntary risk framework, arguing that government regulation lacks sufficient information at this point and is too slow, lagging years behind technological innovation in industry. For Medley, regulatory lags argue for a voluntary approach to nanotechnology whereby companies self-evaluate nano-risks in a formal process and on an ongoing basis.

18. NOTE: the OECD Working Party on Nanotechnology (of which the Policy Roundtable is a subgroup) was established in 2007 and meets twice yearly to discuss emerging policy issues in science, technology and innovation related to the responsible development and use of nanotechnology. Post understands that the next meeting will be held November 30-December 2 in Paris; presentations are typically available at [www.oecd.org/sti/nano](http://www.oecd.org/sti/nano).

19. COMMENT: European regulators at the workshop expect some negative public reactions to nano-foods/cosmetics and possibly nano-packaging -- but said any notion of informing or reassuring consumers via labeling may be stymied by industry reticence. As one Austrian official complained, without industry cooperation (for instance, to self-identify nanotechnology materials and ingredients), labeling is difficult to imagine at this point. END COMMENT.

110. This cable was coordinated with FAS Berlin.

EACHO